

REMARKS

Claims 1-50 were pending in this application when the present Office Action was mailed (May 4, 2004). Claims 1, 4, 5, 9, 12, 14 and 16 have been cancelled. Claims 2, 3, 6-8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 18 have been amended solely to place these claims in independent form, without narrowing the scope of these claims. Accordingly, claims 2, 3, 6-8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 18-50 are currently pending in the application.

In the May 4, 2004 Office Action, claims 19-50 were allowed; claims 2, 3, 6-8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 18 were objected to; and claims 1, 4, 5, 9, 12, 14 and 16 were rejected. More specifically, the status of the application in light of this Office Action is as follows:

(A) Claims 1, 4, 5, 9, 12, 14 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by published Application No. US-2002/0091419 to Firlik et al. ("Firlik");

(B) Claims 2, 3, 6-8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 18 stand objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but are indicated to be allowable if rewritten to be in independent form; and

(C) Claims 19-15 are allowed.

A. Response to the Section 102(e) Rejections

Claims 1, 4, 5, 9, 12, 14 and 16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Firlik. These claims have been cancelled from the application, without commenting on or conceding the merits of the Examiner's position. Accordingly, the Section 102(e) rejections of these claims are now moot.

B. Response to the Indication of Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 2, 3, 6-8, 10, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 18 were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but were indicated to be allowable if rewritten in independent form. These claims have been so amended, without narrowing the scopes of the claims. Accordingly, the objections to these claims should be withdrawn.

C. Response to the Indication of Allowable Claims

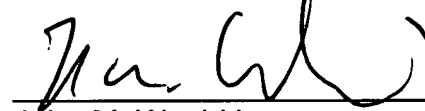
Claims 19-50 were indicated to be allowed, and these claims have not been amended. Although the applicants' attorney agrees with the Examiner's conclusion that these claims are allowable, the applicants' attorney notes that the claims may be allowable for reasons other than those identified by the Examiner, and does not concede that the Examiner's characterizations of the terms of the claims and the prior art are correct.

D. Conclusion

In view of the foregoing, the claims pending in the application comply with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112 and patentably define over the applied art. A Notice of Allowance is, therefore, respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions or believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, the Examiner is encouraged to call the undersigned at (206) 359-3257.

Respectfully submitted,

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